



News Release

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Media Contact:
Stephen McDonald
801-538-7099
Day of Event Contact:
Cyndi Bemis
801-550-4228

Utah Department of Health Offers Free Ski/Snowboard Helmets

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Each year, more than 1,800 Utahns suffer a traumatic brain injury (TBI) that can change their lives forever. Every ski season, dozens of those injuries occur at Utah resorts. That’s why the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) is giving away free, certified ski and snowboard helmets to the first 300 Utahns to hit the slopes at Brighton Ski Resort Saturday, Dec. 4. The giveaway event is part of the UDOH’s ongoing traumatic brain injury awareness and prevention effort.

Utahns suffer TBIs in a variety of ways: the most common causes are motor vehicle crashes, falls, intentional and unintentional shootings and suicide attempts. Twenty-three percent of TBI victims will die from their injuries, and many of those who survive live with lifelong disabilities such as memory loss, lowered intelligence, personality changes and physical impairments.

“Every day, someone in Utah dies of a traumatic brain injury (TBI),” said Cyndi Bemis, media and education coordinator, Violence and Injury Prevention Program (VIPP), UDOH. “And years of research tell us that most of the deaths could have been prevented.”

Until the late 1990s, professional racers were among the few who ever wore ski and snowboard helmets. Then, after the deaths of Sonny Bono and Michael Kennedy within days of each other in 1998, people began to look at helmets more as a necessary part of their ski equipment.

Still, helmets are often hard to find on the slopes. Brighton Ski Resort owner Randy Doyle says he’s always on the lookout for them. “Some days, it seems the majority of our visitors are wearing helmets,” said Doyle. “But more often, only a handful are playing it safe,” he

said. “Helmets are a smart idea, they can help reduce and prevent injuries from falls. I wish everyone would choose to wear one.”

That’s why Doyle was excited to host the helmet giveaway at Brighton. Beginning at 9:00 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 4, representatives from the UDOH, Utah SAFE KIDS Chapters and Coalitions and Fox 13 News will distribute free helmets to the first 300 skiers and boarders who want them. All those wearing the new helmets will also receive \$5 off their Brighton lift passes for the day.

“By putting more helmets on skiers and boarders, we hope to make them a more acceptable part of everyone’s snow sports equipment,” said Bemis. “And the best news is that, unlike earlier designs, today’s helmets look hip and they’re comfortable, too,” she said.

UDOH data show that males suffer nearly twice as many TBIs as females. TBI rates are highest among those ages 15-24 and 75 and older. Motor vehicle crashes account for nearly half of all TBIs among males under age 60, while falls account for 25 percent.

To prevent traumatic brain injuries, the UDOH recommends the following:

- Always buckle up and put young children in car seats in the back seats of vehicles.
- All children who no longer fit in a car seat should be in a booster seat until they are at least 4’9” tall.
- Always wear ski, snowboard, bicycle and motorcycle helmets.
- If you have firearms in your home, keep them unloaded and locked in a safe, or store ammunition separately.
- Pedestrians should always cross at marked crossings.
- Do weight-bearing exercises to keep your bones strong and prevent falls as you age. (Always check with a physician before beginning an exercise program.)
- Keep your home free of clutter: Use non-slip rugs, keep electrical cords out of traffic areas, keep stairs well-lit and sidewalks and steps clear of snow and other debris.

For more information on TBI or the helmet giveaway, contact Cyndi Bemis at 801-538-6348 or 801-550-4228.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.